2 FEEDING AND CARING FOR THE BODY

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"Have a meal daily; wait to have other things."

(Proverb)

Types of Foodstuff

262 2.1. The common items in the Badaga diet are in many cases believed to have either a "heating" or a "cooling" effect on the body. 261 It has thus been possibe to classify the common foodstuffs according to this effect (Table 2), which is an important factor in Badaga therapeutics as well as in the Ayurvedic system. There are however other items that are occasionally eaten, but which it has not been possible to classify in this manner. The peach-tinted pannicled mallow, for example, is a jungle plant with leaves that are sometimes cooked in curry. The citron is a wild fruit that can be used instead of lime for making into a pickle: it has to be kept a week after pickling before it is ready to eat. A wild nettle produces a tuber that is thought to be very nutritious (*Urticaria tuberosa*; Shortt 1868: 60), and a half-dozen other wild tubers are also eaten. Small birds are eaten if caught (but the local rodents and reptiles are not). Larger wild animals like pig, deer, "ibex," and even tiger are sometimes shot or trapped and then eaten, but leopard, buffalo and elephant, though common, are not. Some children like to eat charcoal. Doubtless there are other items that have escaped my notice because of the rarity of their use as food or because their occurrence is very localized.

[128] In Table 2 it will be noticed that the food items have been organized under some conventional subheadings of Western cuisine. This was done for the reader's convenience, and *does not* represent a Badaga taxonomy. It does however happen to underline how each basic category of Western food (e.g. meats, oils) is split by the heating/cooling categorization of the Badagas. The Western reader will

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•261 find it difficult, after inspecting Table 2, to produce any rational explanation for the Badaga categorization. Foods which others would find sweet and watery (e.g. the common Nilgiri barberry) are considered heating, while some foods that others find hot to the

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 25]

Table 2. Classification of Usual Badaga Foodstuffs According to Their Presumed "Heating" or "Cooling" Effect on the Body

	Heating	*Neutral*	*Cooling*	*Cited use in medicine*
VEGETABLES :				
bamboo shoots	×			
capsicum	×			
cabbage	×			
mu:l ki:re (amaranth) leaf	×			
Indian mustard leaf	×			
marrow (large amount)	×			
red onion (large amount)	×			72, 111, 127, 137-139 143, 146
white onion	×			
spring onion	×			
radish	×			
gujji avare (kidney bean)	×			
egg-plant	×			
chili	×			71-72, 111, 117, 138-139, 151, 161
mustard	××			
marrow		×		72, 111
pumpkin leaf		×		
ki:re (amaranth) leaf		×		113
common nightshade leaf		×		
fenugreek leaf		×		105
small white bean		×		
common chickweed		×		
garlic		×		81-83, 128, 143, 146
pea			×	
potato			×	
mulberry leaf			×	
aravaltavare (kidney bean)			×	

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red onion			×	
ellanavare (various broad beans)			×	
turnip			×	
cauliflower			×	
nella ki:re (amaranth) leaf			××	128
FRUITS :				
common Nilgiri barberry	××			99
mountain black plum	×			
peach	×			
limes		×		73, 79, 81, 90, 112, 130
olive linden		×		127
jackfruit		×		
cape gooseberry			×	
purple granadilla			×	
pear			×	
orange			×	
plum			×	
apple			×	
hill gooseberry			×	119, 128
coconut			×	
tomato			×	
plantain			×	
GRAINS :				
arova sa:me (little millet)		×		83, 88, 90, 102-103, 109, 151
akki ganje (barley)		×		
ganje (barley)		×		
maize		×		
bi:r ganje (brewer's barley)	××			
prince's feather	××			
finger millet		×		
ka: sa:me (little millet)		×		137
rice			×	90, 103, 139
e:r sa:me (little millet)			×	

262	MEATS :			
261	eggs	×		
	mutton	×		
	chicken	×		
	fish	×		
	Nilgiri "ibex" or tahr	×		
	pork		×	
	OILS :			
	gingelly oil	×		79, 104-105, 109, 113, 126
	coconut oil	×		74, 85, 112, 134
	castor oil		×	74, 80, 104, 113, 118, 128
	STIMULANTS, NARCOTICS :			
272	coffee	×		77, 80, 82
276	chewing tobacco	×		104, 111, 128-129
273	brandy	×		80
	arrack	×		
276	opium	××		80-81, 127, 131, 139
	betel with lime		×	
272	tea		×	
	OTHER MISCELLANEOUS FOODS :			
263	salt	×		
	milk	×		
	honey	×		
	vibuti (sacred ash)		×	
	weathered feldspar "earth"		×	
	crude sugar (jaggery)		×	81
	buttermilk		×	
	clarified butter		×	
	curds		×	
	crude palm sugar		×	
	black pepper		×	
	water		×	
	butter		××	
263	spices (cooked in curry)	?	?	?

(*Note* : xx indicates an extreme heating or cooling effect.)

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mouth (e.g. black pepper) are considered cooling by Badagas. Furthermore milk is somewhat heating, whereas buttermilk is cooling. Especially curious is the case of the hill gooseberry, which is a cooling food but is treated as heating because "it has many small seeds inside which dry in the bowels and so cause constipation." The best subjective explanation that I have been able to provide for the Badaga categorization is that the heating foods may be more indigestible than others, and hence have a greater tendency to cause heartburn. This is not however what informants told me, and I hesitate to venture the idea.

Preparation of Food

2.2. Badaga cuisine has two aspects to it: one is the preparation of a meal, the second is the preservation of food for its future use.

While Badagas do not have ovens, they have a variety of cooking techniques. A large pot with a rack fitted inside can be used like an oven for baking. Frying, boiling and roasting are the other cooking techniques. (One simple example of a delicacy made from the leaves of cabbage or prince's feather is as follows. The leaves are cut up fine and boiled in water; the water is then drained off. Oil or clarified butter is heated in another pot with onion, mustard and chili. These are cooked until they smell good, then the boiled leaves are added.)

Boiled rice and, until very recently, several millets, form the staple of each Badaga meal. A meal is not considered complete without a curry, however, to be eaten with the rice or millet. This is a vegetable curry more often than not, since even the meat-eaters who make up the great majority of the Badaga population are not able to have meat at every meal. A Badaga proverb reminds us, "If there is no taste in the sauce, will there be taste in the [curry] pieces?" Milk makes the food richer: "If the milk [in cooking is too] much, will the food be spoiled?"—obviously not. Butter is not recommended, however, because it may attack the lungs with "cold" unless it is first clarified by heating.

Eggs, less commonly cooked than mutton, are boiled, fried, or made into omelettes. Some people now eat them raw. Fish is rarely cooked by Badagas, largely because they dislike the smell and are afraid of the bones. (A fish-bone is dislodged from the throat by swallowing balls of boiled rice.) Badagas like their meat hot and peppery

6: Noble K-4,5 (1962-1963) 1989
(1800-1963)

AW50 Badaga AW50
Kota AW55
Kurumba AW56
Toda AW60
Madras Tribes AW63
Kasuva

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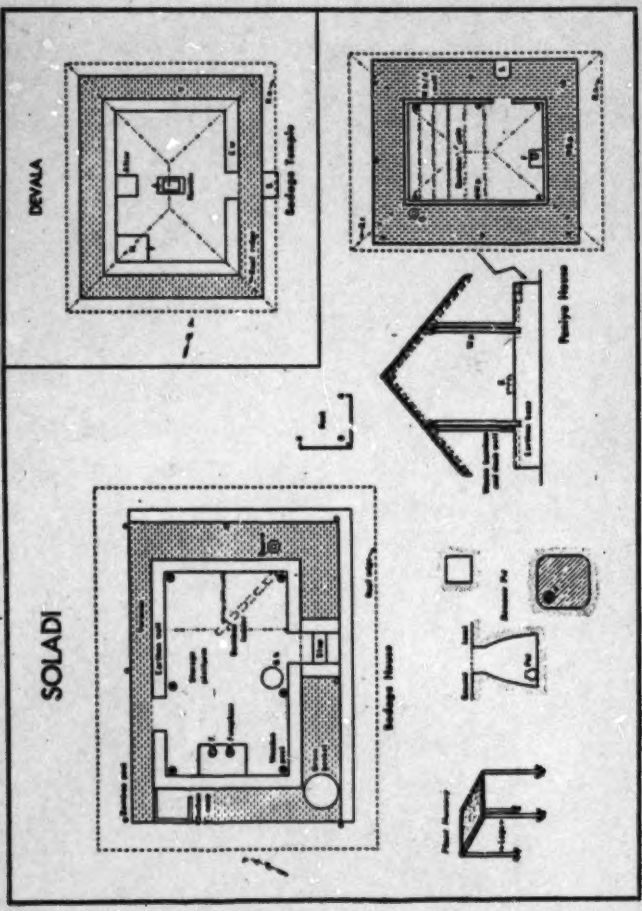

Figure 23. Occupance forms constructed by Wynaad Badagas and Paniyas

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252 visiting affine, for otherwise he will conclude that he is not welcome
[574] in the house. One should eat with one's relatives: "If eaten with ten
people it is milk; if eaten by oneself it is shit." Several proverbs
252 suggest that not all affines are to be made welcome, though: "Is it
539 a bad thing for the affine who has become ruined and came [to us to
eat] a poor quality of finger millet and sour buttermilk?" The use-
less housewife is one who is too lazy to cook regularly: "Not caring
about her husband's hunger, a bad wife will eat the old food herself
[rather than cook]."

Earth-eating

261 2.4. The eating of earths is widespread in South India (Hooper and
Mann 1906: 254). We find that the practice has been reported in
particular from the part of Mysore whence the Badagas fled in the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that a baked edible clay is
even sold in the bazaars there (Thurston 1901: 121; Hooper and
Mann 1906: 256). In that part of Mysore the consumption of raw or
baked clay was fairly common among women especially, and was
said to bring no ill effects. An informant did however state that
261 among chronic earth-eaters "their appearance suggests that they
164 are suffering from pernicious anaemia, the face being unnaturally
swollen or puffed and the abdomen distended, while the limbs are
shrunk except at the joints, which appear enlarged and are said to
be painful" (Thurston 1901: 121). Early medical officers reported
on the dire consequences of habitual earth-eating, especially men-
tioning anaemia and dysentery (Hooper and Mann 1906: 263-70).
[165] It has not been possible to discover whether the high death-rate due
to dysentery among Badagas (see 9.7) can be attributed in part to
this habit. Hooper and Mann (1906: 254) reported the practice as
261 widespread throughout India, and as chiefly confined to labourers
[171] and pregnant women, including Badagas. The practice is common
amongst them, pregnant women being especially fond of the earth,
even though older people abuse them for eating it because they do
not think it a foodstuff. The earth, said to have a pleasant taste and
smell, is yellowish-brown in colour, and is called *suttekal*. It is actual-
ly a weathered feldspar, chemically aluminium silicate, and is the
261 same thing as kaolin. Humans do of course need traces of aluminium
146 in their diet. Dietary deficiency where soils are heavily leached might
thus explain the practice; as it perhaps does the eating of charcoal

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by Badaga infants. One would certainly expect pregnant women and plantation labourers to be the people suffering most from mineral deficiencies in their diet. One clay sample from Ootacamund, of the kind that Badagas eat, had the following chemical components (Hooper and Mann 1906: 262):

Loss on ignition—	9.63%
(including nitrogen)	0.23%
Silica	71.66%
Feric oxide	2.71%
Alumina	4.94%
Lime	5.78%
Magnesia	1.54%
Potash	0.88%
Soda	1.01%
Sulphuric acid	0.06%
Phosphoric anhydride	1.79%

Gopi mud was a clay that used to be mixed with water and left to stand in the house. Later the water developed a salty taste and would be used in cooking (Belli Gowder 1923-41: 2).

Liquor

2.5. There is no doubt that the British introduced the Badagas to the demon drink, for their earliest reports on the community make it clear that "Liquors of an intoxicating quality are never distilled on the hills nor drunk by any of the castes" (Macpherson 1820: lix; cf. Ainslie 1834: 36). Yet by 1829 local Englishmen had brewed beer "from malt of Native Manufacture" (Price 1908: 218). By 1847, as we have already mentioned, Ootacamund had become a centre of "widespread and continuous drunkenness amongst low-class natives" (Price 1908: 51). For nearly a century following that date there are occasional complaints in the literature about the drunkenness of Badagas. Even today it is usually possible to see one or two drunken men in any village in the later afternoon, particularly on festival days.

The local liquor industry has fluctuated with repeated attempts to enforce prohibition, both before and after Independence. At the present time prohibition is once again the law. The women rarely

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843 pregnancy. Furthermore, a man whose wife is pregnant should not kill a snake, lest the spirit of the snake enter the foetus and the [825] child be born dumb, looking like a snake, and with its tongue forever flashing in and out.

There are also various restrictions on the woman's behaviour. She should not eat red onion or garden marrows, otherwise the baby will have itches when born. She should keep herself busy around the house, so that the child will also be lively when born. Immediately after a pregnancy is suspected the girl will be prohibited from washing her clothes or putting on clean ones, lest this make her feel so good that she menstruates. She cannot go to any festival or ceremony at which she might see something new or interesting. She must not cross any large river, and must not cross the boundary of her hamlet either. All of these restrictions apply only till the ninetieth day of pregnancy.

During the dangerous period between the fortieth and sixtieth days the woman must have complete rest, and she generally goes to her father's house for this. During that time the pregnancy can be lost if she eats "heating" foods, those causing an excess of heat [261] in the body. Thus women are not given chilies then, although they want them, because these are heating. Furthermore, a woman should not carry a heavy load, or run, or take long strides, and should be careful while walking down steep places.

[833] A woman should not have intercourse from the time her pregnancy is first recognized until the third month. After that time she can have it, but only at long intervals. Prior to the sixtieth day the woman may abort, in which case the abortion is treated as a menses for social purposes (see above, 3.13.).

4.3. In her third month a woman can become active and eat without the nauseous sensation. Then, when lying in bed early in the morning, she can feel the surface of her stomach and known there is something else there; and generally from the third month she will see some milk if the breasts are pressed. From the start of the fifth month the foetus moves in the womb occasionally. Between the seventh and ninth months the woman can sometimes feel it "gasping for breath."

No special foods or medicines are given the woman from her third month onward, but if she is getting too much "heat" in the body then a particular mixture is fed to her. This is because with excess of "heat" she may have a stillbirth in the seventh or eighth

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night, after it had been carefully tied up in a cloth so that the seeds would not fall out. Although the poppy head could be green or dried it would be more effective if green. The next day it was taken out of the cloth and ground up with some milk: this mixture was swallowed by the patient very early in the morning, before taking any other food. The therapist varied the dosage according to the patient's age, and would continue the treatment if necessary for up to three days.

6.56. An alternative treatment for constipation uses the bud of the hill gooseberry or, in seasons when it has no bud, the leaf shoots. This medicine, which is more effective than the other (6.55), is also taken for one, two or three days before the first meal. As with the poppy head, these buds are ground up with milk and eaten by the sufferer. Some other medicament is tried if the condition does not clear up in three days. Castor oil is now a common laxative: one or 1½ teaspoonfuls are swallowed, and some is also put onto the rib of a tobacco leaf, which is inserted into the rectum (cf. 5.34).

HEMORRHOIDS (*mu:la*)

6.57. Piles is likewise caused by "over-heating" of the body, and therefore the patient is to be given "cooling" foods. Vegetarians eat milk products, non-vegetarians eat certain eggs and meat that are said to be "cooling." Patients also eat *nella ki:re*, an amaranth which grows wild. This is baked with clarified butter (without being first ground up), and is eaten with each meal for about a week.

If when a person defecates a hemorrhoid protrudes, the therapist puts clarified butter on a castor-oil leaf and gently pushes the protrusion back into the rectum with it. This is repeated every time the hemorrhoid appears.

DYSENTERY (*mukkalotte*)

6.58. Another ailment of the belly is said to be "very prevalent in the Badaga villages during the hot months when there is scarcity of water"

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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164 will neither eat nor sleep as usual. Throughout it he should always be covered with cloths, and these can only be of cotton, never wool. The covering is necessary to prevent wind from blowing on the itches. The pus in the spots would exude, but were it to be blown by wind it would go inside the body instead, causing the patient to feel very sick or even to die. The house
164 must always remain ritually pure while someone has chicken-pox; thus men may not smoke in it, the pare-
784 nts must not have sexual relations, and if the patient
[783] is still an unweaned baby its mother must not lie on a bed or on matting, but must sleep on some sacks laid on the floor. During this period nobody throughout the entire hamlet may prepare any foods in oil, and oil may only be used for lamps. When women are cooking in the patient's house, he is taken to another house or at least to the outer room, since the smoke from cooking can make his infection worse. Bands of
[177] Kota and Kurumba musicians, both lower status and impure local tribes, are on no account allowed into the hamlet while chicken-pox prevails there, even though they would normally attend at Badaga weddings, funerals and certain festivals. Therefore if a
164 person happens to die while there is chicken-pox in the
766 hamlet the corpse will quickly be buried or cremated;
177 but then later, when there is no longer any chicken-pox, a band of Kota musicians will come and the traditional funeral ceremonies will be observed, using a stick in place of the corpse. Of all the various taboos that come into play during chicken-pox,
164 that against sexual relations is the most crucial,
784 that against cooking with oil the second, and that against Kota or Kurumba music the third most important.

757 People suffering from this disease are given "cooling" foods to eat, and preferably no "heating"
758 foods at all. If the patient is an unweaned infant
[261] his mother has to adopt this food restriction too. Beyond this, there is also a technique for treating chicken-pox. On the third day after some spots

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754 (*c*) Illness can also be the work of non-Badaga shamans or
177 sorcerers, who can send a bad spirit into the victim. As with ghost
753 possession, it has to be removed by an exorcist who knows the
[755] appropriate spells. It is said that in earlier days every Kurumba who had learnt sorcery was allowed to try his power sout. This would be decided by a formal council of the tribe, who would give the novices a stipulated period, usually one to four weeks, during which the young men could test their abilities. The Badagas would then be warned of what was to come, so the villagers could take every precaution and stay indoors at night. Each youth was permitted to kill one man by sorcery during this period. Deaths in the
[961] Badaga community were also occasionally ascribed to the sorcery of Todas (Rivers 1906: 261, 635); and Kurumbas say there are many Badaga sorcerers too.

828 (*d*) Emotional and mental problems are otherwise said to be the
753 result of sins done by a man's ancestors, whereas bodily diseases
783 are in most cases an effect of the patient's own sins, as in the case of ulceration cited below (see *i*). Thus if the wealthy man becomes poor, or a poor man becomes rich, he attributes the change of fortune to the deeds of his ancestors. If a man lacks appetite, or does not enjoy his life or possessions, then he has a sickness resulting from the sins of his ancestors. There is no cure for it; and so if many cures are attempted and none works, it is thereby known that he has an illness caused by ancestral sin. Leprosy and mental diseases are seen as ultimately caused by that same sin. (As an explanation for the therapist's impotence this is of course very effective.)

732 (*e*) Often we find frequency of an infirmity being explained as
826 an effect of "blood." For example, in one family there are two girls and five boys. One boy and both girls are normal, but three other boys are deaf and dumb, and one is fairly deaf but can talk. As the situation was explained to me, "there must be some wrong in the parents' blood." This is perhaps still an allusion to ancestral sin.

753 (*f*) More immediate causes of some illnesses lie in one's diet or
•261 bodily activities, even in uncleanliness. Among the dietary problems there is a general malady called *so:lu*, "over-heat," caused by eating insufficient milk products. Eating bad food, or eating too quickly, can also bring unfortunate results.

753 (*g*) Over-exertion may dislodge the colon or an artery and bring
826